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# The “No to Khudoni Hydro Power Plant!” Social Movement in Georgia

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## **Abstract**

This article examines the movement “No to Khudoni Hydropower Plant,” as an example of the longest and continuous civic movement in Georgia. Within the theoretical framework of structural functionalism, it claims that structural changes happening in Georgia’s political system during the last 30 years have caused this movement. The opening of an “window of possibilities” during Perestroika and Glasnost made it possible to start the discussion on the sustainability of the project, which later caused the updating of the project and then, structural changes in 2003, and the strengthening of the civil society made it possible to resume this social movement. This paper aims to analyze the various actors, which are involved in the discussions as opponents or proponents of the Khudoni HPP construction and their arguments are the same despite of the period of 30 years; government and investors are the main proponents of the construction while the academia and civil society are opposing it through various types of strategies. The data collected in the field research allows this article to show how the resistance has managed to survive for more than three decades; what are the arguments of a great number of agents involved with the resistance movement and how its resources are amassed and followers recruited and what makes the movement so unique.

**Keywords:** Georgia, civil activism, structural changes, social movement.

## **Introduction**

Unlike the European scientific communities with extensive experience in studying social changes and social movement, such research is relatively new in Georgia for several reasons. Following Bolshevik Russia’s annexation of Georgia, when it became part of the Soviet Union in 1921, any type of civil activism was naturally out of the question during the totalitarian regime. It was not until the times of Perestroika and Glasnost that rudiments of social movement appeared.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Perestroika, which means “restructuring” designates the reform politics within the Communist Party in the USSR in the 1980s; Glasnost, which means “openness”, “publicity” designates the

When discussing the process of formation and development of the social movements in Georgia and its prospects, we must note that a large-scale public action in the late 1980s, even before Georgia gained its independence, displayed features of a social movement to a certain extent.

Because of the developments in the 1990s in Georgia, which included a difficult foreign and domestic situation, civil unrest, wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, social and economical problems, civic activism was mostly limited to pressing political issues. Therefore, issues of human rights and environmental protection almost always fell beyond the civil society's area of interests, which contributed to a certain stagnation of the development of civil society. Only after the "Rose Revolution" of 2003, which resulted in the establishment of state institutions and their enhancement, stability and consequently economic growth, the civil society showed clear signs of activism.

The selection of the "No to Khudoni HPP!" social movement as the case study of this research, and structural functionalism as the theoretical framework, have several explanations. The resistance movement against the construction of the Khudoni HPP is the longest movement experienced in Georgia, which appeared in the Soviet period and continues until today. This movement was strongly influenced by the structural changes happening in the political systems such as Perestroika and Glasnost, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the "Rose Revolution," and the change of government in 2012. The movement registered the participation of various actors from the public and political communities. On one side, there is an active engagement of the civil society, the broad involvement of the scientific community and a diversity of opinions, and on the other side, there is a higher public awareness about the issue.<sup>2</sup> While there are a few studies about environmental activism in Georgia, such as Lia Tsuladze's et al. Work, and several NGO policy papers, the scientific research of the social movement "No to Khudoni HPP" has not yet been carried out.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, this article is one of the first attempts to address this issue.

Thus, based on the theory of structural functionalism and by using qualitative methodology in this article we analyze this topic at the group level considering institutional and non-institutional aspects and explore the correlations among the developments of structural changes and group activism. Our study aims to determine what caused the recent surge of public interest around the issue of the Khudoni HPP project and what factors contribute to the vitality of the issue; what are the stages of development of the movement

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freedom of information and decreasing censorship during the period 1986-1991. Michael Gorbachev led both of these reforms. See: "Perestroika", *History.com* editors, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/perestroika-and-glasnost>.

<sup>2</sup> As estimated by The Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC) in its survey of 2010, the awareness rate throughout the country ranges from 71 per cent to 75 per cent; accessed April 15, 2018, <http://www.crrccenters.org/caucasusbarometer>.

<sup>3</sup> Lia Tsuladze, Nana Macharashvili and Ketevan Pachulia, "SOS Tbilisi: Challenges to Environmental Civic Participation in Georgia," *Problem of Post-Communism*, 65, no. 5 (2018): 327-243.

against the construction of Khudoni and how it grew into a social movement, which are the actors involved in the process, and what is the degree of communication among them.

## Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The study of social movements has developed in an interesting way. Initially, social movements were discussed as a deviant behavior that could change mankind through effects on religious and political values. Currently, it has several definitions that differ based on the theoretical perspective adopted. In the scientific literature, the term “social movement” is defined from the perspective of various theories. Among these theories are the “resource mobilization theory” (McCarthy, Mayer), collective behavior theory (Turner, Killian), the political process theory (Tilly, Kitschelt, Tarrow) and new social theories (Touraine; Melucci; Eder; Buechler) developed after structural transformations.<sup>4</sup> Despite the differences among these theories, all of them agree that a social movement is the collective behavior directed towards the change of society; however, they have different evaluations of the level of community organization and engagement in politics, shared beliefs, symbols, identities, etc. One of the main issues in defining this term is the lack of empirical clarity. As Mario Daiani explains, this is so because every collective activity is called a social movement “in fact, social and political phenomena as heterogeneous as revolutions, religious sects, political organizations single-issue campaigns are all, on occasion, defined as social movements.”<sup>5</sup> According to

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<sup>4</sup> John D. McCarthy and Zald N. Mayer, *Social Movements in an Organizational Society* (New Jersey: New Brunswick, 1987); Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, *Collective Behavior* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, 1987); Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978); Herbert Kitschelt, “Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies,” *British Journal of Political Science* 16, no.1 (1986): 57-85; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Alan Touraine, *The Post-Industrial Society: Tomorrow's Social History: Classes, Conflicts and Culture in the Programmed Society* (New York: Random House, 1971); Alberto Melucci, *The Process of Collective Identity*, eds. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1971); Klaus Eder, “Does Social Class Matter in the Study of Social Movement? A Theory of Middle Class Radicalism,” in *Social Movements and Social Classes*, ed. Louis Maheu (London: Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995): 21-54; Steven M. Buechler, “New Social Movement Theories,” in *Social Movements: Perspectives and Issues*, eds. Steven M. Buechler and Frank K. Cylke (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1995): 295 – 319.

<sup>5</sup> Mario Daiani, “The Concept of Social Movement,” *The Sociological Review* 40, no. 1 (1992): 1–25.

him, any type of collective behavior can be considered as a social movement if it has three main criteria, namely, confrontation for power between two sides, close informal networks among actors, and a clear and distinguished shared collective identity.<sup>6</sup> Later, the criteria of continuity and the possibility of seeking more resources were added to differentiate social movements from individual activity.<sup>7</sup> One of the main reasons for choosing the “No to Khudoni HPP” case is the fact that it satisfies practically all the above-mentioned criteria.

One of the paradigms used for the study of social movements is the theory of structural functionalism. According to the general description, this is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability.<sup>8</sup> Following this theory, the social-functionalist model in social movement studies believes that actors do not create movements; rather, they are mostly created by social and political situations.<sup>9</sup> Analyzing social movements through the prism of the structural-functional theory, Neil J. Smelser observed social movements as a side effect of structural changes that always follow the transformation process.<sup>10</sup> Mass collective behaviors and structural changes are inter-related for Manuel Castells, as well. Discussing the origin of early urban social movements, he highlighted the process of consumption.<sup>11</sup> Later, he related it to the appearance of “network societies” in the West, and in the South, and new technologies have played a crucial role in this process.<sup>12</sup> According to Alberto Mellucci and Claus Offe the role of the actors is also important because they have great influence on the situation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mario Diani, “Networks and Participation,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004): 339-359; Mario Diani, “Networks and Social Movements: A Research Program,” in *Social Movements and Networks*, eds. Mario Daiani and Doug McAdam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 299-318.

<sup>7</sup> Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements, An Introduction* (MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd 2006).

<sup>8</sup> John Macionis and Linda Gerber, *Sociology* (no city indicated. Published by: Pearson Education Canada; 7th edition, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behaviour* (New York: Free Press, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (California: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Alberto Melucci, *The Process of Collective Identity*, eds. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Claus Offe, “Reflections on the Institutional Self-Transformation on Movement Politics: A Tentative Stage Model,” in *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, eds. Manfred Kuechler and Russel Dalton (Cambridge: Polity Press Cambridge, 1994): 232-50.

Thus, within the theoretical framework of structural functionalism, it is possible to study social movements from several perspectives, such as the group level. The creation of a collective leads to the formation of a collective identity, which at its turn creates the notions of “us” and “other” and leads to inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the collective.<sup>14</sup> The collective behavior of stakeholder groups is important because by such behavior, groups are able to find and maintain or hold onto resources that are necessary for the development of a social movement, something that unorganized public activity will find it difficult to do. In addition, stakeholder groups help create the so-called “solidarity impetus.”<sup>15</sup> Moral shock in response to the violation of deeply engrained rules and norms serves as the first stage of mobilization, and protesting organizations transform individual fear into anger, which suggests the significance of feelings and emotions in a social movement.<sup>16</sup>

Within the framework of this study analyzing the resistance movement against Khudoni HPP social movements are discussed as more or less organized, but sustainable collective actions that take place when society is informed, mobilized and ready for long-term resistance and change of social values.

Throughout the study, we obtained and analyzed primary and secondary data using a qualitative methodology. We analyzed Georgian periodic publications from 1979 to the present;<sup>17</sup> different internet sources;<sup>18</sup> governmental decrees, decisions, international declarations ratified by the Georgian Parliament, as well as other official documents about the issue in general.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements, An Introduction*. (Malden: Blachwell Publishing Ltd 2006), 92.

<sup>15</sup> Debra Friedman and Doug McAdam, “Collective Identity and Activism: Networks, Choices, and the Life of a Social Movement,” in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. Aldon Morris and Carol M. Mueller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992): 273-297.

<sup>16</sup> James Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> The newspapers analyzed are: *Komunisti* (Communist), 1979 – 1990, 152 issues; *Sakartvelos respublika* (Republic of Georgia), 1990-2016, 78 issues; *Rezonansi* (Resonance), 1992-2016, 212 issues; *Kviris palitra* (Palette of the Week), 1995-2016, 48 issues; *24 Saati* (24 Hours), 2002-2014, 74 issues.

<sup>18</sup> News websites: *Netgazeti* (Net newspaper) 2013-2016, <https://netgazeti.ge/>; *Tabula* 2010 – 2016, <http://www.tabula.ge/>; *Civil.ge* 2010 – 2015, <https://civil.ge/>; *For.ge* 2011-2015, <https://for.ge/>; online publishing: *Liberali* (Liberal) 2009-2016, <http://liberali.ge/>.

<sup>19</sup> Official documents: the Convention on Access to Information on Environmental Issues, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in this Area; *Law of Georgia on Environmental Protection* 1996; Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on public access to environmental information and repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC, accessible in database of EUR-Lex; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/19>; Council Directive of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (85/337/EEC), accessible in database EUR-Lex, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/20>; Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programs on the environment. Accessible in database EUR-Lex,

To follow ongoing developments and debates, we conducted semi structured in-depth interviews with different stakeholders. The first target group was formed of citizens living in Khaishi, Svaneti, where the HPP is projected to be built. Fifteen respondents were interviewed using snowball sampling. Local movement activists and neutral inhabitants were interviewed about their attitudes towards Khudoni HPP, governmental policy and the resistance movement. The second target group was made of government representatives including the local self-government in the Svaneti region (two respondents from the local assembly and administration) and two respondents from the central government, as it was quite difficult to make them agree to the interviews. The main focus of the interviews was the position of the respondent's institution or agency concerning Khudoni HPP and the collaboration with other stakeholders involved in the process. Other target groups were NGO representatives working on environmental issues and involved in the "No to Khudoni HPP" movement. Five interviews have been conducted with this group.

### Debates on the Building of the Khudoni HPP

The idea to build Khudoni has a very long history. It was first mentioned during the Soviet era in the late 1960s. Later, in 1972, the USSR Planning Committee approved the idea.<sup>20</sup> Following some preparatory works, the construction of Khudoni HPP began in 1985 and actively progressed until 1989. The government of the USSR allocated 464 million Soviet rubles for the construction, and out of the total budget, 160 million had already been spent by 1988.<sup>21</sup> Due to the fact that citizens in the USSR did not have the opportunity to express protest there are more than two decades between the emergence the idea of the construction, and the launch of the movement. Such important changes as Perestroika and Glasnost gave the opportunity for civic mobilization, which is well explained by structural functionalism theory.

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<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/21>; Directive 2003/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 providing for public participation in respect of the drawing up of certain plans and programs relating to the environment and amending with regard to public participation and access to justice Council Directives 85/337/EEC and 96/61/EC, accessible in database EUR-Lex, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/21>; Council Directive 91/692/EEC of 23 December 1991 standardizing and rationalizing reports on the implementation of certain Directives relating to the environment, accessible in database EUR-Lex, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/22>.

<sup>20</sup> Anzor Chitanava, "Xudonhesi mdinare engurze-konfrontacia tu kohabitacia" (Khudoni HPP-Confrontation or Cohabitation), *Rezonansi* (Resonance), April 12, 1985, 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> Currency rate of one Soviet Ruble in 1985-1989 fluctuated between 0.92-0.6059 USD\$ (Archive of Bank of Russia).

In any stage of its activation the movement has no single actor/leader. The involvement of different actors (political parties, NGOs and interest groups, scientific circles, members of society, and local population) is one of the main features of the Khudoni issue, which leads to a variety of arguments and interests. Actors, engaged in the movement, share the same identity and create coalitions. At the same time, it is notable that the arguments for and against the construction have not changed much since the beginning of the Khudoni issue. Despite the fact that “No to Khudoni HPP” belongs to the type of environmental movement from the time of its emergence, it draws much more attention to the social and economical issues than to the ecological one. Only NGOs working on this profile are trying to raise awareness on ecological problems and to strengthen the resistance movement using ecological arguments too. Nevertheless, ecological problems do not have a significant role in the discourse of locals and other actors as one.

As a rule, the government and investors represent the opposite side of the movement and their supporting arguments are always directed toward gaining economical benefits.

Even in Soviet times, Georgia was unable to meet its own demand of electricity. Among members of the USSR, Georgia ranked on the last place in terms of per capita production of electricity.<sup>22</sup> Having exited the Soviet system of common supply of electricity, Georgia was left to its own energy resources, and the electrical power deficit began. Although the problem has now been essentially resolved owing to different measures taken over the years, Georgia remains dependent on electricity imports. However, later arguments of opponents were also based on the economic benefit. According to one of these arguments, Khudoni HPP would be the second largest powerhouse in Georgia next to Enguri HPP (produces nearly 5, 46 billion kWh annually) and would produce 1.5 billion kWh annually.<sup>23</sup> This additional electricity would contribute to Georgia’s energy security and improve the balance of trade in the field of electricity.<sup>24</sup> Currently, the economic benefits are the main arguments that supporters (especially the government) cite to reinforce their positions. Notably, these arguments have existed since the day the project was conceived, and they continue to be relevant. Proponents of construction also highlight the creation of jobs and increase of local budget revenues.

The opponents and their arguments are varied and entail not only economic, but also environmental, social and cultural aspects. According to the

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<sup>22</sup> Andria Papashvili, “Gvchirdeba sakutari elektroenergia?” (Do We Really Need Own Source of Energy?), *Komunisti (Communist)*, September 20, 1990, 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> Elene Kvantchilashvili, “Xudonhesi” (Khudoni Hydropower Plant), *Tabula*, November 21, 2013, accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.tabula.ge/ge/story/77287-xudonhesi>.

<sup>24</sup> Genadi Meskhia, “Xudoni - mesame goli sakutar karSi” (Khudoni - Hat-trick Against His Own Team), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, November 23, 2013, 8.



economists opposing this project, Khudoni HPP will be constructed on a “build, own and operate” basis that makes the investor the full owner of the project. Therefore, for the symbolic price of one dollar, the investing company receives the property constructed during the Soviet period and worth 300 billion US dollars. In addition, according to the agreement with the government, exported products are not legally taxable in Georgia, and therefore, the state budget will not receive any benefit for the period of nine months when the investor will be exporting the energy. Therefore, the project is not profitable for the country, while the company will make a profit of 1.6 billion dollars.<sup>25</sup> Opponents also argue that the construction of Khudoni and gigantic power plants in general is obsolete considering modern technologies. They highlight the prospects of renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, geothermic energy, tidal power and the waste-to-energy process. According to them

“similar to other large-scale hydroelectric power plants, Khudoni represents outdated technology and old energy that are catastrophic from an ecological point of view. A state focused on such anachronism has no future, especially considering that humanity is at the brink of the third industrial revolution and will soon adopt a new energy regime.”<sup>26</sup>

The issue of land is similarly relevant. Georgia is a small country, and therefore, land is of high value — a factor that cannot be renewed or replaced by any other factor. Notably, a similar position was voiced in the early stages of the project in the 1980s by a number of experts, including energy experts that highlighted technologies for the extraction of new energy sources and the importance of non-renewable natural resources: “One should also consider the fact that the cost of kilowatt hour decreases every year, while the value of land increases.”<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the development of infrastructure required for implementation of the project — building new roads and improving existing ones — falls under the obligation of the state and requires significant financial resources.

The main problem is that Khaishi Village, where Khudoni is expected to be built, is similar to all of Svaneti that is located in a zone of high seismic hazard (vulnerability index of 9). Given the size of the power plant, the construction is highly likely to cause tectonic fluctuations and activate seismic processes.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Maka Kharazishvili, “Naxtomi energetikaSi xudonhesis gareSe” (A Big Jump in Energy System without Khudoni HPP), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, December 12, 2013, 1.6.

<sup>26</sup> Gia Maisashvili and Zaza Tabagari, “Xudonhesi momavlis winagmdag” (Khudoni HPP Against Our Future), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, February 4, 2014, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Mixeil Ghoghoberidze, “Eleqtroenergias miwa da garemo ar unda Sevwirot” (Environment Should not be Sacrificed to the Electricity), *Komunisti (Communist)*, June 14, 1989, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Genadi Meskhia, “Xudoni-mesame goli sakutar karSi” (Khudoni - Hat-trick Against His Own Team), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, November 23, 2013, 8.

Some negative factors may seem purely environmental, but in fact, they are causally related to economic factors, as well. In particular, two large reservoirs in one region (Khudoni and existing Enguri) will negatively impact the environment; climate will change, and so will the structure of snow. The appearance of wet snow would mean that Svaneti would lose its function of a winter ski resort and consequently its status of a region with unique flora and fauna, climate and geographic location. The region, known as a resort zone, has great tourism potential during both the summer and winter seasons. The construction of Khudoni and its subsequent negative ecological impacts may harm the image of Svaneti as a touristical destination, which means that, in the long run, the project will not be as profitable for the local population (whose main source of income is tourism) or for Georgia’s national economy.

Another argument of the opponents of the construction is based on the social and cultural dimension of the region. Building the hydropower plant will submerge historic monuments, including the Khaishi castle from the middle ages and another historic monument dating back to the first century (not yet examined) under water, as well as churches that are part of the cultural heritage. At the same time, an area of 528 hectares will be submerged, and 528 families (approximately 2000 people) will be forced to resettle, which leads to another problem, an ethno-linguistic one: many natives of Svaneti, already a small group, will be affected by the resettlement and thus face the problem of self-preservation.<sup>29</sup> The result will be a desolated 50 km-long line, and it is likely that the Svan language, an ancient Kartvelian language, will be jeopardized in the case of a non-compact resettlement of the population.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the activation and pausing phases in the movement these are the main arguments for more than three decades for the actors engaged in it. Appealing to them makes the issue of Khudoni part of the political agenda.

### *The issue of Khudoni HPP on the political agenda and the non-institutionalized level of group activism*

The idea of building or not Khudoni HPP has long been an important part of the political and economic discourse, debated with varying degrees of intensity and relevance from the time of the communist regime until the most recent coalition of political parties “Georgian Dream,” which is forming the

<sup>29</sup> Representatives of Trans Electrica Ltd. do not agree with this estimation; they believe that these numbers are much higher than the actual numbers and state that only 700 people will have to resettle.

<sup>30</sup> Maka Kharazishvili, “Ra cvlilebebi Sevida xudonhesis xelSekrulebaSi” (What have Changed in the Khudoni HPP Treat), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, May 21, 2013, 5, 8.

government since 2012. Despite differences in the political beliefs and ideologies of the political forces that have been in power in Georgia, it is safe to conclude that the project of Khudoni HPP has found its way onto the political agenda of all authorities (except for Zviad Gamsakhurdia's administration, which lasted for less than two years, 1991-1992) and is attributed paramount importance for the economic and strategic development of the country.

Setting up the Khudoni construction issue on the political agenda and the civic activism related to it can be divided in several stages. All of the stages have a common characteristic — each stage coincides with structural changes in the political system, political elites and economical transformations. As in Diani's conception, each time of the activation of the "No to Khudoni HPP" movement political system was the opposing side of the movement, and the existed system despite the structural and political changes, was always trying to achieve the same aim – to build Khudoni HPP.

At the same time, each time of revival, the movement has "network characteristic" to use Clusters' term and by using these networks in different ways it was trying to achieve its aims. According to the structural functionalist theory, actors do not create movement. The creation of actors and their activities are only the result of the structural changes. The case of Khudoni is a good example of this: the creation of a collective identity at all of its stages was always defined by the situation and had no clear leader at any stage of its development.

To analyze the civic engagement around the issue of Khudoni, we can differentiate between the actions of public and formal civil society organizations. Since the day it was initiated, the Khudoni project has been the subject of active citizen participation expressed through different activities including protest rallies, petition signing and advocacy campaigns.

There is no information about the attitudes in society regarding this project at the initial stage because the state system in that period did not allow citizens to express their views. Stage one was related to the reformation process of the political system in the 1980s, Glasnost and Perestroika, which brought important political, social, economic and cultural changes. This process was the foundation of the creation and strengthening of civic activism.

Initially, the protesters included only Svans - the local population of Svaneti. Starting in May 1989, the population of Mestia began protesting by holding large demonstrations, sit-ins and hunger strikes, demanding that construction of Khudoni be stopped.<sup>31</sup> Later, the pool of activists was broadened to include "laborers, representatives of intelligentsia, young students and people

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<sup>31</sup> Editorial, "Ras itxovs svaneti?" (What Svaneti Demands?), *Komunisti* (Communist), May 26, 1989, 4.

from different regions.”<sup>32</sup> This civic activism and the criticisms by academics led representatives of “Hidromshenebeli” — the state agency that was in charge of the construction — to address an open letter to the authorities of the Georgian SSR, stating,

“if it is proven scientifically that building the hydropower plant is harmful and 160 million Soviet Rubles have gone down the drain... all those who are to blame for wasting the money and inflicting a moral trauma upon thousands of workers of ‘Hidromshenebeli’ must be held liable administratively, morally and legally.”<sup>33</sup>

Soon, the protest against Khudoni (along with other issues) grew into a movement for independence, as activists involved in the protest later became leaders of the national movement; messages against Khudoni HPP became messages demanding independence from the USSR. At this stage, the Khudoni issue had merged with the demand for independence. In addition, this issue itself was the consequence of being in the USSR. Because of the fact that the builder and the system were the same force, the fall of the system caused the stopping of the construction too. If Georgia gained independence, the problems associated with the construction of Khudoni and the other projects initiated by the Soviet government would be solved.

The large-scale public campaign against Khudoni HPP and the National Movement first reaped its reward in 1989, when the Council of Ministers of Georgia adopted a resolution to suspend the project. In 1990, under the order of the Council of Ministers, an ad hoc commission was established that made certain amendments to the Khudoni project, but eventually, it was political developments that followed and in particular the collapse of the USSR that hindered the realization of the project.

Because of the developments in the 1990s in Georgia (difficult foreign and domestic situation, civil unrest, wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, social and economic problems and so forth), civic activism was mostly limited to pressing political issues. The next stage of the reappearance of Khudoni HPP in the political agenda arose when a basic level of political stability was reached during President Eduard Shevardnadze’s administration. However, the economic situation was still severe; the stark energy crisis in newly independent Georgia was one of the most illustrative examples of this. Due to problems in the field of electric power supply, the construction of power plants in general and Khudoni HPP in particular was proposed many times. Representatives of the Georgian government at that time and particularly Shevardnadze stated in

<sup>32</sup> Editorial, “Xudoni moitxovs kompleqsur Seswavlas” (Khudoni Issue Requires Complex Study), *Komunisti (Communist)*, January 25, 1989, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Vakhtang Chachibaia, “Problemata kaskadi enguris kaskadze” (The Cascade of Issues on the Enguri HPP), *Komunisti (Communist)*, July 15, 1989, 3.

many speeches that putting the project on hold was a big mistake. Discussions about the issue were invigorated following 1995. It was time to discuss the Khudoni project as one of the solutions to the electric power crisis. According to the Minister of Energy, David Zubitashvili, “had Khudoni been built, we would not have problems.”<sup>34</sup> However, the absence of investors made it difficult to realize the project. Accordingly, this period was not marked by any public engagement. However, representatives of the government highlighted the dwindling public action, noting the “lack of unity among opponents of the construction”, which they thought would make it less painful to realize the project if the necessary financial means were secured.<sup>35</sup> The opponents may have been “losing unity” because of the severe energy problems of the country.

Only after the “Rose Revolution” in 2003, which brought changes in the government and the entire system, did civil society show clear signs of activism. Basic reforms and structural changes were implemented by the Georgian president Mikhael Saakashvili (2004-2013), including the transformation of the Soviet-type militia, the reform of the court and defense systems, drastic economic reforms, systemic struggle against corruption and crime in general, the improvement of the investment environment resulting in the establishment/strengthening of political institutions, and the growth of defense capabilities and the economy.<sup>36</sup> The growth of the economy and foreign investment made the construction of Khudoni HPP realistic as an argument for the diversification of energy resources and financial benefits.

The activation of the issue at this stage clearly illustrates how the fundamental changes in political and economical system promotes activation of civic activism and social movements. In the given case the revitalization of movement was not the result of the activation of some actors rather than the changes in political and economical system. The Khudoni question returned once again to the political agenda. In 2007, the Georgian government signed an agreement with an Indian company called Continental Energy International (later renamed as Trans Electrica Ltd.) for a feasibility study. After 4 years, in 2011, the Government of Georgia signed a contract worth one billion dollars of investment with Trans Electrica Ltd. However, the Georgian society did not

<sup>34</sup> Giorgi Kalandadze, “Xudonhesis mepatronis vinaoba male gairkveva” (Khudoni HPP Owner soon will be Declared), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, May 29, 1997, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Maka Kalandadze, “Interviu gia gachevhilladzestan” (Interview with Gia Gachechiladze), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, February 12, 1996, 21, 22.

<sup>36</sup> Georgia’s ranking in freedom of economic: in 2002- 96<sup>th</sup> place; in 2007 – 31; in 2011-26 (p. 47); direct foreign investment: in 2003- \$499107; in 2007-\$2014842 (p.59); doing bussiness ranking: in 2006-2007 Georgia replaced from 112<sup>th</sup> to 37<sup>th</sup> position; in 2011 – 11<sup>th</sup> place (p.49); Source: The Economic Transformation of Georgia in its 20 years of independence, Summary of the discussion paper (European Initiative Liberal Academy, 2011), 7-9, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://www.ei-lat.ge/images/doc/the%20economic%20transformation%20of%20georgia%20-%2020%20years%20of%20independence%20eng.pdf>.

respond until the government started taking concrete steps towards the construction. The local population of the village of Khaishi and a considerable part of society adopted a clear radical stance as illustrated by the protest campaign “No to Khudoni HPP.”

In contrast with previous civic activism, which was mainly expressed in rallies and strikes, more organized and varied forms of resistance characterize this phase. In particular, in addition to rallies held in Svaneti with the participation of activists from across the country, the activists also organized rallies in different cities of Georgia. One of the strategies of local activists was the rejection of negotiations with representatives of Trans Electrica and the refusal to allow the company to organize meetings and establish an office in Svaneti.<sup>37</sup> Another strategy considered was directly addressing the public persons with the highest popularity ratings for support and thus involving them personally in the process. One of these persons was the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia, who has the highest rate of personal trust in the country -94% in 2013, during the time of the public’s appeal.<sup>38</sup> Even more, the Georgian Orthodox Church (as well as Ilia II personally) can be considered not only as an institution “formatting religious beliefs, private life and morality but also as a strong socio-political actor which sometimes appears as a competitor of the state.”<sup>39</sup> The second person addressed, Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, was the most legitimate politician. In the Parliamentary elections of 2012, when for the first time in Georgia’s recent history the authority was changed through elections, Ivanishvili played a decisive role in the victory of the opposition (in November of 2013, in the period of public appeal, his rating was 74%).<sup>40</sup> Although the Catholicos-Patriarch did not publicly declare his support, representatives of one of the Eparchies soon arrived in Svaneti and supported the local population, demanding from the state the defense of cultural heritage, including churches, from being submerged under water.<sup>41</sup> Taking into consideration the fact that the structure of the Georgian Orthodox Church is highly centralized and strictly

<sup>37</sup> Maizer Gelovani, “XaiSSi xudonhesis investors ofisi ar gaaxsnevinis” (In Khaishi Locals Obstructed to Open Investors Office), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, October 18, 2013, 8.

<sup>38</sup> News: “NDI: patriarqis reitingi 2%-it gaizarda” (NDI: Patriarch’s reiting increased with 2%), *Liberali (Liberal)*, May 05, 2014, accessed April 18, 2016, [http://liberali.ge/news/view/10851/NDI-patriarqis-reitingi-ori-protsentit-gaizarda?fbclid=IwAR2h83ygicTiK0IB-I39GHsRwfktvJLw-Lqgj64O9SZ52S\\_ExIvvp2a1\\_c](http://liberali.ge/news/view/10851/NDI-patriarqis-reitingi-ori-protsentit-gaizarda?fbclid=IwAR2h83ygicTiK0IB-I39GHsRwfktvJLw-Lqgj64O9SZ52S_ExIvvp2a1_c).

<sup>39</sup> Salome Dundua, Tamar Karaia and Zviad Abashidze, “National Narration and Politics of Memory in Post-Socialist Georgia” *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences* 17, no. 2 (2017): 231.

<sup>40</sup> News: “NDI: ivaniSvilis reitingi 23 %-it Semcirda” (NDI: Ivanishvili Reitinge Dropped 23%), *Liberali (Liberal)*, May 05, 2014, accessed April 19, 2016, [http://liberali.ge/news/view/10851/NDI-patriarqis-reitingi-ori-protsentit-gaizarda?fbclid=IwAR2h83ygicTiK0IB-I39GHsRwfktvJLw-Lqgj64O9SZ52S\\_ExIvvp2a1\\_c](http://liberali.ge/news/view/10851/NDI-patriarqis-reitingi-ori-protsentit-gaizarda?fbclid=IwAR2h83ygicTiK0IB-I39GHsRwfktvJLw-Lqgj64O9SZ52S_ExIvvp2a1_c).

<sup>41</sup> Maka Kharazishvili, “yvelam unda gaigos, rom xudonhesi ar aSendeba!” (Evryone must Know that Khudoni would not Build up!), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, February 07, 2014, 1,9.

regulated, the activity of the Eparchy cannot be perceived as based on an individual decision to support the movement; it shows loyalty from the Patriarchate, as well. In contrast, Ivanishvili had a negative assessment of the Svans' appeal to the Catholicos-Patriarch and attempt to involve him in the process, stating, "Even the Patriarch was disturbed and asked that HPP was not built."<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, locals made their resistance more radical and united and, accordingly, have drawn a clear line between "us" and "them."<sup>43</sup> Svans (more than 200 people) for the first time in recent Georgian history carried out the old Svan ritual of swearing an oath, stating that no Svans will support the HPP: "We'd rather die than break the vow."<sup>44</sup> The purpose of this ritual was to strengthen solidarity and the sense of common identity among the resistance movement, which according to Skocpol is characteristic for a social movement.<sup>45</sup>

This unprecedented resistance is derived from the fact that the construction of Khudoni HPP is associated with many problems, which can be summarized based on a survey of the Khaishi population.

According to Svans Construction of the hydropower plant will influence the identity of the Svan community: The movement against the construction is associated with the defense of the community's uniqueness: "If they build the plant, half of Svaneti will move. The community will disband."<sup>46</sup> The Svan community is one of the most conservative communities in Georgia and strictly follows its customs; cultural heritage is particularly problematic for locals. "The village where we were born and raised will be submerged, so will our church, graves that date back to eleven and twelfth centuries, the only thing that connects us with the deceased."<sup>47</sup> Hence, the issue of Khudoni is related to maintaining Svan identity for future generations: "I am fighting for my children not to lose their roots, and maintain their Svan identity."<sup>48</sup>

For locals, financial follow-up of the project is seen through resettlement and its consequences. There are expectations that the compensation for resettled locals will be great. However, the local population is unaware of the exact

<sup>42</sup> Editorial, "IvaniSvilis hesebis mSeneblobis mxardaWerashi patriarqis imedi aqvs" (Ivanishvili Hopes Patriarche will Support in Construction of Hydropower Plants), *24 Saati (24 Hours)*, September 17, 2013, 1-3.

<sup>43</sup> Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements, An Introduction*. (Malden: Blachwell Publishing Ltd 2006), 92.

<sup>44</sup> Maizer Gelovani, "XaiSSi xudonhesis investors ofisi ar gaaxsnevines" (In Khaishi Locals Obstructed to Open Investors Office), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, October 18, 2013, 8; A tradition of "swearing an oath on the icon" entails taking a vow before the icon of St. George and taking a responsibility. It has been used as a norm of informal justice that may not be violated under Svan tradition.

<sup>45</sup> Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

<sup>46</sup> Interview with local activist, August 9, 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with local, August 7, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with local, August 8, 2015.

amount of compensation that may be awarded or the criteria for calculating and awarding the compensation. Some of the locals evaluate this as a threat because it may undermine the unity of the community. “Everyone is of the same opinion. Someone may be thinking to himself somewhere in a corner about the possibility to get [a lot of] money at the expense of destroying this region, but I think these people are no more than one percent.”<sup>49</sup> A local who openly supports the idea of building the dam confirms this, saying, “Part of us wants to (build) but are reluctant to talk because of respect for each other.”<sup>50</sup>

They do not trust government departments and often the population evaluates the interests of the state and of the investor as essentially the same. “The government is involved, and apparently, [the construction of Khudoni] is in their interest.”<sup>51</sup> Local distrust is not directed against any particular government or its representatives; rather, the community is reluctant to trust and feels estranged from the government as an institution. According to the community members, the fact that former green activists are currently in power (as members of the ruling coalition) does not change anything. “This is how it always works. If the opposition were to come to power, they would continue to do the same, and when they [current government] become the opposition, they will start protesting it.”<sup>52</sup>

The lack of communication between the population and authorities is seen as another crucial problem: “(government) have to persuade me, make me believe that I will be better off there [new place of resettlement] than where I am now.”<sup>53</sup> Instead of this type of persuasion, when commenting on the government’s policy, the locals refer to “targeted attacks”, in which the government tries to win over individual members of the local community. The absence of communication is also evidenced by the fact that the local population does not know the exact compensation amount, and resettlement plan. Even the Ombudsmen, Ucha Nanuashvili points out to the lack of communication and addresses the Ministry of Energy and generally, the government to be more actively engaged in a communication process with the local Svan population.<sup>54</sup>

According to the locals, the main reason why they supported the “Georgian dream” in the 2012 elections was their promise not to build Khudoni HPP. “When talking about the plant, Ivanishvili [the Prime Minister] bragged

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with local, August 9, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with local, August 12, 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with local activist, August 8, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with local activist, August 8, 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with local, August 11, 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Beka Danelia, “Sida gaurkvevloba da 130 SeniSvna xudontan dakavSirebit” (Internal Misunderstanding and 130 Remarks on Khudoni HPP Case), February 5, 2014, accessed March 20, 2016, <https://for.ge/view/29174/Sida-gaurkvevloba-da-130-SeniSvna-xudonhes-Tan-dakavSirebiT.html>.



that he was going to visit Svaneti and talk [to us] personally, but he didn't."<sup>55</sup> However, they also noted that, despite the lack of communication, the current government, unlike its predecessors, does not make any authoritative decisions and sees the possibility for dialogue: "Had Saakashvili been here today, the plant would have been built (...) Had they dared [to protest] during Saakashvili's [presidency], it would have been a different story."<sup>56</sup> An MP of Mestia, representing the parliamentary majority, further reinforced these views, by saying: "Our predecessors used to invade villages with Special Forces and drive the population out. Unlike them, we are negotiating with the people."<sup>57</sup>

It is interesting that in the reflections of the locals, the ecological consequences of the HPP received little attention. An explanation may be the fact that the "(population) does not have time for environmental issues and is more concerned by economic and social issues."<sup>58</sup>

### Institutionalized Level of Group Activism

In the research on the "No to Khudoni HPP" movement considering activism at the group level, it is also important to study the role of institutionalized actors, namely, political parties and non-governmental organizations.

Generally, and not only in the case of Khudoni HPP, since the early 1990s, ecological issues have been among the least important topics for Georgian political parties. Environmental issues are uncommon in the pre-election programs of parties and even the Khudoni case was never included.

At the same time, politicians' positions towards the construction of Khudoni HPP are related to whether they are in power or in the opposition. While in the opposition, politicians actively exploit the public stance against Khudoni. However, after coming to power, they become the proponents and implementers of the Khudoni project. In this regard, it is possible to separate two main cases.

First, eco-activists, as at that time, no parties other than communist parties were allowed represented the opposition in the 1980s and were the main organizers of protest rallies against the construction of Khudoni. After establishing the Green Party in the 1990s and winning parliamentary seats in the 1992 elections and forging a close partnership with a governmental political

<sup>55</sup> Interview with local, August 9, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with local, August 10, 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Iago Natsvlshvili, "Xelisuflebam ukan ki ar unda daixios, azrze unda movides" (Government should not Retreat, but Analyse the Main Points of the Issue), *Rezonsansi (Resonance)*, February 3, 2014, 1,4.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with NGO representative, October 14, 2015.

party, they abandoned their strong political stance against Khudoni in favor of supporting the government’s view. The speaker of the Green Party explained this change by saying that their “position did not change, but rather, it was transformed. Our vision about the development of energy became global, and therefore, Khudoni HPP cannot be viewed independently.”<sup>59</sup>

The second case occurred in 2012, when today’s ruling coalition, the Georgian Dream, pledged the following in its pre-election platform for the 2012 parliamentary elections: “Considering the high seismic hazard, the construction of large hydroelectric and nuclear power plants [will be] prohibited.”<sup>60</sup> In addition, during their meetings with the local population in Svaneti, representatives of the Georgian Dream vowed to halt the project (in the 2012 elections, the coalition Georgian Dream gained overwhelming support in the region, mainly because during informal meetings with the local population in Svaneti it promised not to build Khudoni HPP). However, the coalition’s stance on Khudoni dramatically changed after it came to power. After winning the elections, Ivanishvili and other government officials began to highlight the importance of HPPs in general and particularly the importance of major ones for energy development and security in Georgia. Subsequently, the issue of Khudoni became an issue of state importance and was tied to Georgia’s economic recovery. As Ivanishvili stated soon after winning the elections:

“We (the government) cannot obstruct the strategic development of our country. Don’t believe the opponents (here he addresses ‘our beloved Svans’) – the only thing that they are good at is making a fuss. You should know that the Khudoni plant needs to be built, just like many other hydropower plants.”<sup>61</sup>

In different political parties, significant protest concerning “No to Khudoni HPP” was raised by non-governmental organizations that had been trying to get actively engaged in the process since the day the initiative was unveiled. Representatives of the government have seen the activists as main initiators of this movement. As Minister of Energy Kakhi Kaladze stated “We have suspicions that a group of certain individuals are telling the local population what to do.”<sup>62</sup> But in fact NGOs were not initiators rather than “public speakers.”—Mostly exactly this sector has taken over itself to plan the

<sup>59</sup> Maka Kalandadze, “interviu gia gachevhilladzestan” (Interview with Gia Gachechiladze), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, February 12, 1996, 21, 22.

<sup>60</sup> Political Coalition “Bidzina Ivanishvili-Georgian Dream,” *Pre-election Programme*, 2012; <http://www.ivote.ge/images/doc/pdfs/ocnebis%20saarchevno%20programa.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> Editorial, “IvaniSvils hesebis mSeneblobis mxardaWeraSi patriarqis imedi aqvs” (Ivanishvili Hopes Patriarche will Support in Construction of Hydropower Plants), *24 Saati (24 Hours)*, September 17, 2013, 1-3.

<sup>62</sup> Mari Mgaloblishvili, “XaiSelebs vigac martavs” (Khaishi Residents are Ruled), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, May 28, 2013, 6.

resistance movement and as in case of Clusters “network society” NGOs were the initiators to unite different actors of resistance movement’s for caring more consistent company.

The proof of it is that the most recent period has been marked by NGOs’ focus on advocacy campaigns rather than limiting themselves to the efforts of a watchdog organization. NGOs have actively cooperated with the local population. They have collected, systematized and provided the population with information about Khudoni HPP and pertinent issues. They have promoted the formation of negative public sentiments not only at the local level but also throughout Georgia and raised public awareness about alternative sources of energy production to highlight that Khudoni is not the “panacea”, the only solution to the energy problem or the only “export resource.”<sup>63</sup> On the contrary, it may not become an export resource at all if the cost of electricity generated by the plant increases. Moreover, currently, there are various sources for generating renewable energy.

NGOs are actively trying to cooperate with state bodies and improve applicable legislation. However, their influence on environmental policy is rather limited and mostly “formal”. Usually, the government follows the principle of “formal participation” by simply facilitating “engagement for engagement’s sake” and “meeting and sitting” without any actual progress.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, despite “marginalization from the government”, NGOs attempt to create a regional green network and find allies in small organizations that operate at the local level.<sup>65</sup>

The key outcome of the NGOs’ active work is the delay of the construction process. In 2013, the Minister of the Environment, Khatuna Gogaladze stated, “they (the previous government) should have conducted a study first and signed an agreement or a memorandum afterwards.”<sup>66</sup> As a result, the Ministry of the Environment proposed to invite a group of international experts to study the risks and benefits of Khudoni HPP construction. The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) found that essential information was lacking to prepare a final environmental impact report and requested at least one year to deliver the document. A member of the NCEA, Mr. R. Slootweg stated, “Georgia as a country does not know what it will lose or gain as a result of building the dam. Therefore, it is difficult to see the arguments that justify building of the dam at

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<sup>63</sup> For instance, the government was offered an alternative project that entails the construction of a dam with low curvature, but the investor believes that it is not profitable.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with NGO representative, October 10, 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with NGO representative, October 13 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Maka Kharazishvili, “damatebiti eleqtroenergia tu datborili svaneti” (Electroenergy or Submerged Svaneti) *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, December 07, 2013, 9.

this moment.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, NGOs’ protesting and active engagement both locally and throughout the country through protest rallies and mobilization of media forced the government to acknowledge the deficiencies in the Khudoni HPP project and forced the government and the investor to work on improving the applicable documentation.

While the government does not intend to step back from the project implementation, the fact that it made an important concession by reconsidering the “build, own and operate” model and introducing the idea of state ownership could be considered as a small but notable achievement.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusions

The case of “No to Khudoni HPP” analyzed here highlights the main trajectories and challenges in the development of a social movement. These should be analyzed within the context of the systemic structural changes of the country, as much correlation is notable between the “No to Khudoni” social movement and events such as reforms in the USSR, the collapse of the USSR, and independence and reforms after the “Rose Revolution.”

The protests against the HPP construction started with the demonstration of Svans. They soon gathered the support of different agents of society, who started spreading these ideas using different strategies throughout Georgia, and local protest transformed into a strong social movement.

Representatives of the social movement participants include the local population of Svanti, civil society organizations, opposition political parties, and experts from various fields because the issue has social, cultural, economic, ecological, religious and historical dimensions. All actors at institutional and non-institutional levels are linked to each other by a strong sense of solidarity, which is the result of well-planned advocacy propelled by NGOs. Another important precondition of the success and viability of this movement was the coordinated activities of locals and NGOs in Svaneti as well as in other parts of Georgia, which together protested the construction of the HPP.

Identifying the positions of the government and the investor and compelling them to recognize the activists as a relevant actor are important sub-goals for the social movement participants. This identification of the government and the investor is to a great extent related to the fact that political parties in the opposition criticize the construction of the HPP, while after

<sup>67</sup> Maka Kharazishvili, “Naxtomi energetikaSi xudonhesis gareSe” (A Big Jump in Energy System without Khudoni HPP), *Rezonansi (Resonance)*, December 12, 2013, 1,6.

<sup>68</sup> Editorial, “Mtavrobam Sesazloa Xudonhesi investors chamoartvas da proeqti tavad ganaxorcielos” (Possibly Khudoni HPP will be Build by the Government), *Tabula*, April 19, 2017, accessed April 10, 2016, <http://www.tabula.ge/ge/story/119437-mtavrobam-shesadzloa-xudonhesi-investors-chamoartvas-da-proeqti-tavad-ganaxorcielos>.

gaining power, they begin to support the project. The social movement participants are united against the government's lack of communication and non-deliberative decision-making. According to the local population, the main goal of existing communication is to win citizens' support for the HPP construction, while NGO representatives evaluate the existing level of communication as fictitious "communication for communication's sake."<sup>69</sup>

Finally, we can conclude that the "No to Khudoni HPP" movement represents an ongoing process of stabilization and civic society development in Georgia as well as political stabilization and economic recovery enabled the state to start thinking about construction. As Tilly argues "political opportunities constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions of contention."<sup>70</sup> As an example of this kind of political opportunities can be discussed structural changes in Georgian political system, stabilization and strengthening of civil society.

Currently, it is impossible to speak about the final results of the construction or movement because the government has rarely mentioned the issue since the pre-election period in 2016. According to the last statement of Kakha Kaladze, there is the possibility that the state will realize the construction of Khudoni HPP, and activists and the local population are awaiting the government's decisions.<sup>71</sup>

## Annexes

*Table 1. The political system and the "No to Khudoni HPP" movement*

<b>Changes in the Political system</b>	<b>Khudoni construction phases</b>	<b>Social movement phases</b>
Soviet Period (1960s)	Announcement of the Khudoni HPP Project	N/A
Soviet Period of Stagnation (1970s)	Develop the Khudoni HPP Project by the USSR Planning Committee	N/A
Glasnost/Perestroika (from 1985)	Starting the construction of Khudoni HPP	Started local protest against Khudoni HPP
End phase of Perestroika /Glasnost (1988-90)	Amendments to the Khudoni project made by Council of Ministers Georgia	Protest transformed to social movement

<sup>69</sup> Interview with NGO representative, October 10, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Tilly, "Wise Quack," in *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*, eds. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 34.

<sup>71</sup> Kakha Kaladze during 2012-2017 was a Ministry of Energy of Georgia and since 2017 he is serving as mayor of Tbilisi.

Fall of the USSR (1991)	Shut down of construction	N/A
Gaining of independence (economical and institutional stagnation 1991-2003)	Unsuccessful attempt to include Khudoni HPP renovation idea on the political agenda	N/A
Rose Revolution (2003)	The government decided to renew and construct Khudoni HPP	Re-activation of “No to Khudoni” movement
Change of government (2012)	Update of construction strategies	Continuous activation of “No to Khudoni” movement

*Source:* This table was made by the authors based on the analyzed collected data.